



TITLE:

System and Reality: The Camel Trust System fo the Gabra

AUTHOR(S):

SOGA, Toru

CITATION:

SOGA, Toru. System and Reality: The Camel Trust System fo the Gabra. African Study Monographs 1997, 18(3/4): 157-174

ISSUE DATE:

1997-12

URL:

<https://doi.org/10.14989/68162>

RIGHT:

SYSTEM AND REALITY: THE CAMEL TRUST SYSTEM OF THE GABRA

Toru SOGA
Hirosaki University

ABSTRACT This paper analyzes the “camel trust system” (*dabare*) of the Gabra, pastoralists in the Eastern Province of Kenya. The camel trust system creates the multiple networks in the Gabra society. This paper describes the trust system and analyzes the relationships which are found in the multiple networks. Then, how the trust system makes Gabra imagine the reality of their ethnicity and clanship is discussed.

Key Words: Gabra; Pastoralist; Camel; Exchange; Clanship; Ethnicity.

INTRODUCTION

In pastoral societies, people use livestock as a form of social exchange. Instances of livestock transfer marks specific stages of life, such as circumcision or marriage. Livestock are given to warriors as praise for courage. Livestock is paid as compensation for crimes such as murder by the guilty party. Such general phenomena have been noted in ethnographies of many pastoral peoples (cf. Spencer, 1973; Almagor, 1978; Evans-Pritchard, 1940; Dahl & Hjort, 1976; Thomas, 1966), and apply as well to the Gabra.

The Gabra are pastoralists in the Eastern Province of Kenya. Pastoralists transfer livestock in various ways, as gifts, on the basis of short-term loan, and as trade. In addition to these forms of transfer, pastoralists among Eastern Cushitic societies, such as the Rendille, Boran, Gari, have another special transfer system (Sato, 1992, 1994; Torry, 1973; Schlee, 1989; Spencer, 1973). In this paper, this special transfer system is called the “trust.”⁽¹⁾ Trust can be conceived of as a kind of long-term loan.

The first part of this paper outlines the trust system of the Gabra. Usually, a camel owner trusts out (loans) most of his camels to other Gabra (as a trustor), and he lives on camels trusted in (borrowed) from other Gabra (as a trustee). Trustees can, in turn, trust out offspring to another Gabra. Trustors and trustees are recognized as a *jal* (friend), connected through the trusting of camels. This *jal* chain creates multiple networks in the Gabra society. This paper analyzes the four relationships which are found in the *jal* networks.

Second, this paper analyzes how this trust system makes the Gabra imagine the reality of two overlapping societies, one the Gabra as an ethnic group and the other as a particular clan. Gabra society is divided into clans. The trust system has the function of strengthening clan membership. On the other hand, the trust system also raises the sense of belonging to the broad Gabra community.

Field research for this paper was conducted intermittently from November 1990

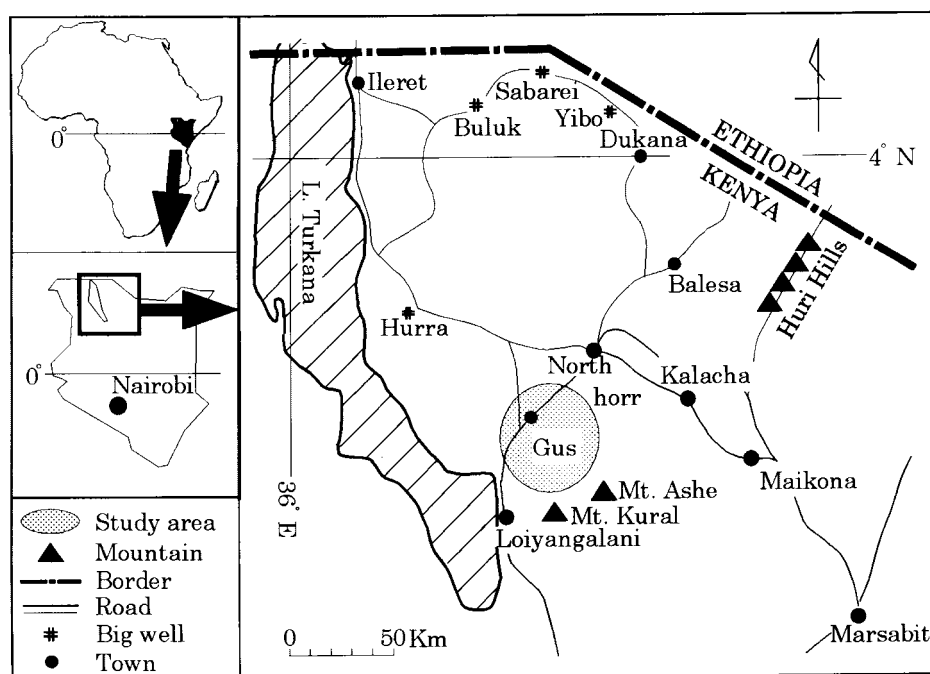


Fig. 1. Study Area.

to March 1996 in the Gus Sub-Location, located 50 kilometers south-west of North-horr, which is the administrative center of the North-horr District (Fig. 1). The period of research totaled to 16 months.⁽²⁾

OUTLINE OF THE GABRA

I. Gabra

The Gabra live in a 350,000 square kilometer area spread from the Marsabit District of Kenya to the Sidamo Province of Ethiopia. According to a 1989 census (Republic of Kenya, 1994), the Gabra population in the Marsabit District was about 30,000. Linguistically, Gabra speak a dialect of Boran that is classified as being of the Oromo group of Eastern Cushitic language (Whitely, 1974; Gamta, 1989).

The land of the Gabra is one of driest areas in East Africa. The average of annual precipitation in the North-horr over the twenty eight year period from 1959 to 1987 was only 158 millimeters. Only a few Gabra engage in hill agriculture under the guidance of the African Inland Church. The majority depend primarily on camel, goat, sheep products and secondarily cattle.

The Gabra live in an area surrounded by other ethnic groups, such as the Turkana (*turkan*), the Rendille (*rendil*), the Samburu (*kora*), the Boran (*boran*), the Gari (*safar*), and the Dassanetch (*galaba*). Gabra regard them as enemies (*nyapa*).

However, marriage can be sometimes observed between a Gabra and Rendille, and a Gabra and Boran.

The members of a family group (*worra*) separately inhabit settlements (*olla*) and livestock camps (*fora*). Livestock camps are constructed on the basis of various kinds of livestock, namely camel camps (*fora gala*), cattle camps (*fora loni*), and goat and sheep camps (*arjala*). Livestock is shifted between the settlement and livestock camp with every rainy season and dry season. In the rainy season, Gabra keep the livestock in the settlement and, as the dry season advances, they shift livestock from the settlement to the livestock camp.

II. Descent Groups

Gabra society is organized according to patrilineal descent and its basic unit is clan (*balbal*). There are about forty clans in the Gabra society, composing of five phratries (*gos*); Algana, Sharbana, Gar, Galbo and Odola. As well, clans are divided into of moiety; Lossa and Jiblo. For example, Disa clan belongs to Algana phratry as well as Lossa.

Each clan consists of one to seven lineages (*min*). All Gabra can concretely trace his lineage up to the founder. Normally, the descent of a clan can be traced back seven to eight generations, but some clans, such as the Rendil clan can be traced back just three generations. The founder of such "new" clans joined the Gabra from other ethnic groups, and these recruits are called *galtu*.⁽³⁾

The aspect of phratry is important in Gabra daily life, because each phratry has its own territory (Torry, 1976). For example, in the Gus Sub-Location where I conducted my field research, Algana is the major phratry and Algana men possess most of the wells in this location. Thus, most of the Gabra are in contact with the members of their phratry in the course of their daily life. Moreover, most of the marriages are observed within the phratry (Torry, 1976), and each phratry makes a special settlement called *olla ya'a* which constitutes the religious and political center of Gabra life. However, I would like to emphasize that the phratry do not occupy a certain area exclusively. Those people who belong to other phratries can reside and use the wells in an area which a different phratry occupies.

Moiety is referred to only when Gabra need to decide their turn for praying in the religious ceremony, or when they make an appeal to the public for aid to the person who suffers great losses or serious injuries as a result of an enemy's pillage or a wild beast. However, moiety is not so important in Gabra daily life.

Clan is a very important element. A person confronting a difficult problem can expect the help from his *milo*, or clan's members. The reverse is also true. Everyone has to help his *milo* when they are experiencing difficulties, because the problem which his *milo* has will ultimately affect him. Clan is also the unit of exogamy. Thus, each individuals of the Gabra are strongly involved with his clan.

Ownership right of the livestock and residential patterns are two important features germane to our topic. First, ideologically speaking, livestock are possessed by a clan. Each clan has their own ear-cut-mark and brand, which are put on their personal livestock. The idea that livestock are possessed by a clan is sometimes revealed in an occasion when a clan member will pay a bride wealth with his per-

sonal camel on behalf of poor man of his clan. Second, clan members are widely scattered in the area which the phratry, to which the clan belong, own and use. Each family group of the clan tends to build settlements with their affines (Torry, 1976), but not with other family groups of his clan. The function of these features will be discussed afterward.

The segment of lineage is seldom referred to in the Gabra daily life, except by those whose clan is very big, such as Alano clan or Elmale clan. In these big clans, it is not clan but lineage which possess the livestock, that is the unit of exogamy.

THE FORMS OF CAMEL TRANSFER

I. Aspects of Camel Possession

It is each family group that in practice possesses the livestock and manages them, while the clan ideologically owns the livestock. In the family group, more than one person insist on their right of ownership on each livestock. Baxter (1970: 126) pointed out, "Every beast is the focus of a complex of rights and cannot be said to have one legal owner." This applies as well to the Gabra. However, Gabra externally consider that all livestock which the family group keeps belong to the patriarch (*abba worra*). The father is the patriarch. He represents the family group and manages those livestock.

The livestock which are kept by a family group can be classified into two categories according to the rights of possession. A family group possesses all goats and sheep in the enclosure, however, the camels and cattle which are kept in the enclosure consist of both those possessed by the family group and those not possessed by the family group.

The camels for which the family group holds the rights of possession are called *halal* (hereafter personal camel). The personal camel can be disposed of according to the dictates of the patriarch of the family group. On the other hand, the camels which are not personal camels (hereafter holding camel) can not be disposed in such a manner. The family group can, however, make use of the holding camel products of holding camels, such as milk, blood and its labor. The rights of possession of such holding camels belong to another family group.

II. Forms of Camel Transfer

The complicated aspects of camel possession was consequences resultant from the complicated forms of camel transfer. Gabra transfer their camels as gifts, on the basis of short-term loan, through trade and trust.

1. Gift

Transferring a camel as a gift includes the transfer of the rights of possession. When an owner transfers a camel as a gift, the ownership of the camel is also transferred from transferor to transferee. Thus, a holding camel can not be used as a gift. The typical form under which gift camels are transferred among Gabra is *qaban-*

qaba, a camel of circumcision, which is transferred from a maternal uncle to his nephew, and *qarat*, bride wealth, which is transferred from a groom's family group to bride's family group.

2. Trade

There are two types of trade, buying (*bita*) and selling (*gurgur*). Gabra purchase camel with money, goats or sheep. Most of the sellers are Somali, who buy camels from Turkana or Somali and bring them to the Gabra for selling. The price of a male adolescent camel (*gurbo*) is around 7 goats or sheep, and that of a female adolescent camel (*orge*) is around 14 goats or sheep. A female adolescent camel is also exchanged with an adult castrated camel (*dufar*).

On the other hand, Gabra people seem reluctant to sell camels. Only those people in great difficulty sell a camel, in which case they usually sell an adult castrated camel at the same rate described above. If they need money urgently, they butcher the adult castrated camel and sell its meat.

3. Short Term Loan

There are two categories of holding camels. One is that which is transferred by short term loan and the other is that which is transferred by trust.

Gabra lend camels to other family groups for a certain specified period as a short term loan (*erug*). Both personal camels and holding camels can be lent out on the basis of a short term loan, except for the camel which is itself borrowed from another family group as a short term loan. Short term loans are used by family groups which do not have enough camels. For example, a family group lacking sufficient camel milk would specifically borrow a milk camel for one to three years: the family group which has no bull camel for mating would borrow a bull in mating season: and the family group with insufficient loading camels for shifting settlements would borrow loading camels for several days. The short term loan for milk camel and a milk camel itself are called *karashime*.

4. Trust

Trust (*dabare*) is the most common form of camel (as well as cattle) transfer. Trust is a long-term loan in which only nulliparous camel (*orge*) can be used. Both personal camels and holding camels can be trusted, except for the camel which itself is borrowed from another family group as a short term loan.

In a trust transfer, the owner transfers his personal camel to someone without the right of possession. Therefore, ownership of the camel does not change from trustor to trustee after having trusted. Trustees can keep a trusted camel as long as the owner does not ask for its return. They have the right of use of the trusted camel and what it produces, most importantly milk. The rights of possession of female offspring of a trusted camel belong to the owner of the trusted camel. However, the rights of possession of male offspring of trusted camel belong to the trustee of the trusted camel. As a result, all trusted camels are female.⁽⁴⁾

Trustor and trustee become intimate friends through the trusting of a camel and they refer to each other as *jal*. The word *jal* means friend. Although Gabra often use this term for anyone in daily life, only those who trust camel or cattle can call each

other *jal*. Those who do not trust camel or cattle are not considered *jal* but rather acquaintances.

Trustees can, in turn, trust out the offspring of a trusted camel to other Gabra, which I call "sublease" in this paper. Through subleasing trusted camels to other Gabra, the *jal* relationships become interconnected, extending down to sublease trustees. The human relationships resulting from such a *jal* chain can be configured diagrammatically. For this purpose, consider a camel (maternal) X, for which the owner is X_0 and the trustees who keep the trusted camel are consecutively X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n (where n is a natural number).

The word *jal* is applied only to those who trust camel directly. Those who are not directly connected by virtue of a specific trusted camel do not recognize themselves as *jal* friends. In other words, when X_0 trusts out his personal camel to X_1 and X_1 subleases its female offspring to X_2 , X_0 and X_1 , X_1 and X_2 have a *jal* relationship with each other, while X_0 and X_2 do not. Subsequently, X_2 subleases a trusted camel to X_3 , and X_3 subleases its female offspring to X_4 in this manner. The length and development of the *jal* chain is thus extended on the basis of the subleasing of camels. Since a single individual usually trusts out several camels to some men, and, conversely, he gets several trusted camels from some trustors, the *jal* chains which originate with different camels are, in a sense, connected. In this way, the *jal* chain creates a multiple network in the Gabra society.

From here, let us rearrange the way of transfer and the aspects of possession of camel. There are both personal camels and holding camels in any enclosure. Most male camels are personal camels, because the male offspring of a trusted camel becomes the trustee's property. There are, however, few female personal camels in any enclosure, because Gabra trust out most of their personal camels to other family groups. Most of the female camels are trusted camels and there are a few short term loaned camels. Usually, an owner trusts out most of his personal camels to other Gabra, and he lives on camels trusted in from other Gabra.

THE TRUST SYSTEM

Of the four means of camel transfer (gift, trade, short-term loan and trust), trust is the most common. Indeed, it would not be wrong to say that trust is the only way for Gabra to get camels. In this section, the details of the trust system will be highlighted from the viewpoints of (1) process of trust, (2) human relationships which are made by trust system, and (3) the rules regarding trusted camels.

All names used in case examples are fictitious. The names of phratry and clan to which the individual belongs is shown in parenthesis (phratry with a capital initial and clan with a small initial). For example, the transcription of "Adano (Algana, disa)" means Mr. Adano of the Algana phratry, Disa clan.

I. The Process of Trust

Begging is the first step to getting a camel through trust. The one who wants to get a trusted camel asks someone who has many camels if they would be willing to

trust a camel. After receiving a definite promise, the recipient makes a trip for begging, called *imaltu*. In *imaltu*, the trustee presents items such as chewing tobacco, tea leaves, sugar, cloth and money. A milk bucket for milking (*golf gala*), a wooden bell for a camel (*koke*) and wild sisal (*argi*), a material for making rope or roof mat, are recognized as the most effective presents. Before turning over the trusted camel, the trustor must not use those three presents. It is, of course, very hard for a young unmarried man to prepare the *imaltu* presents, because they cannot dispose of livestock for money. Thus, such trustee collects wild sisal for the trustor, or herds the trustor's camel instead of bringing such presents.

Trustee can get a trusted camel after four to eight *imaltu* undertaken over a two to three year period. At the time of the transfer, the trustee visits the trustor to collect the camel on an appropriate day of the week.⁽⁴⁾ The trustor whips the trusted camel lightly with spray of *mader* (*Cordia sinensis*) while he blesses the camel saying "hori dala, darari (Give birth, increase your offspring)." Then, the trustor chases the trusted camel out of the enclosure through the eastern gate and gives it over to the trustee.

The trustor can temporarily trust out an uncastrated male camel (*gurbo*) instead of a nulliparous camel, as in the case where the trustor has no nulliparous camel in his enclosure. This particular form of trust is called *daran*. The trustee has to castrate this male camel and increase its weight so that in future, the trustee can exchange this fat castrated male camel for a nulliparous camel. If this male camel dies before such an exchange, the trustee makes the hide of this camel into a belt, which upon informing the trustor of the camel's death, he exchanges for a nulliparous camel. Gabra often conduct *daran* trust to unmarried young men, because they have no children who are in need of camel milk.

There is another form in the process of trust. Upon return of a short term loan camel, an individual may receive a trusted camel. This, however, applies only to the short term loan for the purpose of milk, or *karashime*, in which the lender is bound to trust a nulliparous camel to the borrower when the *karashime* camel is returned.

II. Human Relationships Made by Trust System

The *jal* chain contains four human relationships, (1) a direct relationship between trustor and trustee, (2) an indirect relationship among the people who are connected with the trusted camel, (3) an indirect relationship between the owner of the trusted camel and any subleased trustees, and (4) a direct relationship between the owner of the trusted camel and the trustee who get a trusted camel from him.

(1) The direct relationship between trustor and trustee is characterized by intimacy and loose reciprocity. Gabra transfer their camel with agnates, affines, genitor, ex-villagers and those who share the joys and sorrows experienced at the livestock camps. Torry (1973) pointed out that about sixty percent of trusted camel are transferred intra-phratry.

Both trustor and trustee take great pleasure when they become a *jal*. The relationship they enjoy becomes tighter through trusting a camel. The trustee owes the trustor a great deal. Because of the trusted camel, the trustee has access to camel products, importantly milk. If the trusted camel gives birth to a male, it becomes the

trustee's. In case of female, it will eventually produce milk, or the trustee can sublease it to other Gabra to make another close tie. The trustor may sometimes visit trustee to request something, usually some small item or staple, such as cloth, tea leaves, sugar and so on. The trustee is glad to try to comply with the trustor's demand. However, it is not strictly a unilateral relationship. The trustee sometimes conversely requests something of the trustor. For example, if the trusted camel dies immediately after it is trusted, the trustor usually takes pity on the trustee and tries to trust out another camel without the usual *imaltu*. Thus, the trustor and trustee cope with any problems which arise in close cooperation.

There is, however, an occasion that the owner sometimes asks trustees to return the trusted camel. Asking sublease trustee to return a trusted camel often occurs on the occasion of the owner's marriage. When a Gabra man marries, he has to pay one nulliparous camel and two uncastrated male camels as bride wealth. Payment of the male camels is not problematic, because most of the males held are personal camels of the individual. However, most of the female camels are trusted camels and thus, it is difficult to provide a nulliparous camel from within one's own camels. On such occasion, an owner may ask a trustee to return a nulliparous camel, which he then uses as bride wealth.

When the owner ask for the return of a camel, the camel would be returned based on the trustor-trustee dyad. For instance, let us suppose the owner X_0 trusted out his camel to trustee X_1 , then its offspring were subleased from trustor X_1 to sublease trustee X_2 , and trustor X_2 to sublease trustee X_3 . When the owner X_0 needs a camel, he should ask X_1 for its return. Even for the camel owner, it is undesirable to ask sublease trustees directly. X_1 , in case he can not find a suitable camel in his herd, asks X_2 for a camel. After X_2 returns the camel to X_1 , he then returns it to X_0 . In the same way, if X_2 has no appropriate camel in his herd, he asks X_3 for a camel. X_3 returns the camel to X_2 , after which X_2 returns it to X_1 , and X_1 returns it to X_0 in turn. Thus, the relationship of trustor and trustee functions as the relationship of the creditor and debtor when the owner asks for the trusted camel return.

(2) The second relationship is the indirect relationship among the people who are connected with the trusted camel. For example, when a person (X_2) subleases a trusted camel to sublease trustee (X_3), who then subleases its offspring to another sublease trustee (X_4), X_2 and X_4 are connected by this indirect relationship. Even if they would happen to know that they are indirectly connected by a certain trusted camel, there would be no intimacy and no debt of gratitude for the trustor. No requests can be made on the basis of this relationship.

(3) The third relationship is between a camel owner (X_0) and any sublease trustee (X_2, X_3, X_4, \dots). Although camels are returned on the basis of the dyadic relationship of trustor and trustee, when they need a camel, some owners would directly ask the sublease trustee, to return the trusted camel. By virtue of this owner's unusual conduct, the existence of a relationship between the owner and any sublease trustees cannot be ignored for the Gabra.

Although it is rare, an owner can unexpectedly visit the trustee and demand various things. An owner may demand some small things, such as tea leaves, chewing tobacco, sugar, cloth, if he visits sublease trustee just to see the condition of his personal camels in his enclosure. However, if an owner had serious financial problems,

he must demand precious things such as goat or sheep, or even a castrated camel.

Sublease trustees thus fear the owner of a trusted camel,⁽⁵⁾ because the owner holds the absolute right to the trusted camel. Trustees uniformly attempt to welcome the owner with delicious food and try to meet his demand. However, trustees can not always do so, especially in the case of an unusually heavy demand. In some cases, the trustee cannot or will not meet the owner's demand and the owner compulsorily recalls all of his camels which that trustee holds.

Case No. 1

Isako (Algana, boruga) trusted out his personal camel to Manmo's father (Algana, elmale). In 1970, the Gabra suffered severe drought and hunger. At about this time, Isako requested an ox from Manmo, and Manmo provided it. However, several months later, Isako came again and requested a castrated camel. Manmo told him that he had no castrated camel in his enclosure and therefore refused this request. He also pointed out that he have provided Isako's recent request. But Isako did not back down, and compulsorily recalled the three trusted camels which were his personal camels.

The owner is an element both fearful and disagreeable for the trustee. The owner can unilaterally demand something without regard for the trustee's circumstance. The trustee must agree to owner's demand or risk compulsory recall of his trusted camels. The owner also checks the trustee's treatment of trusted camel, especially when a trusted camel has died. The relationship between an owner and any sublease trustee is characterized by the self-seeking posture of the owner and timid response of the sublease trustee.

This self-seeking posture of the owner differs greatly from the attitude of the trustor. The sublease trustee must agree to the owner's demands, but does so not out of intimacy but fear for the compulsorily recall.

(4) Lastly, let us examine the relationship between an owner (X_0) and a trustee (X_1) who has a direct trusted camel from the owner. This relationship is similar to that between a trustor and a trustee. The owner and a trustee may have had a close relationship even before the owner trusted out his camel. This trustee would subsequently act as a "firewall" between the owner and other sublease trustees, when the owner is in a trouble. He looks after the owner with tender care, and consequently the owner's demands do not extend to other trustees. As long as this trustee can solve the owner's problem, the owner would not visit other sublease trustees to make demands.

Perhaps the most peculiar point of the Gabra trust system is the fact that there are relationships not only between the two persons who directly give and receive trusted camel, but also between an owner of a trusted camel and sublease trustees. While the relationship of close persons is thus strengthened by trusting a camel, for the trustee, however, he is automatically involved in another relationship, namely between the owner and any sublease trustees.

III. The Rules of Trusted Camel

Sublease trustees (including the trustee who got a trusted camel from the owner directly) have to keep and maintain the trusted camel according to a set of strict rules. There are two categories of rules, one concerning the owner's manifestation and the other concerning the treatment of a trusted camel.

1. The Rules of the Owner's Manifestation

A trusted camel has three marks, the ear-cut-mark, the brand, and the matrilineal name. These marks manifest the ownership of the trusted camel. The rules of the owner's manifestation prohibit trustee making any changes to these marks.

It is strictly prohibited to change the ear-cut-mark and brand of trusted camel. Each clan has its own ear-cut-mark and brand. The owner of a camel puts his clan's ear-cut-mark and brand on his personal camel, and trustees have to put the same mark on any trusted camel and its female offspring. To begin with, Gabra especially dislike changing ear-cut-marks. Even for the camel which an owner got as a bride wealth or which he took from an enemy, he would not change its original ear-cut-mark. Such being the case, trusted camels do not in fact have the ear-cut-mark of its owner's clan's. This does cause misunderstanding and confusion (see Case No. 2).⁽⁶⁾

The name of a camel is not peculiar to any clan. An owner gives a name to his camel based on its body's color, the shape of ear-cut-mark, or events surrounding acquisition. For example, the personal camel which a matrilineal uncle gave his nephew to praise him for his courage was named after *koli*, a vessel for a certain ritual ceremony. The nulliparous camel which an owner got in exchange for a castrated camel was named *dufar*, which means simply a castrated camel. Strictly speaking, only female camels have names, however, males are usually called by the same name as the mother camel for convenience.

The combination of these three marks have the function of indicating the owner of the trusted camel regardless of where it is among the Gabra. Gabra strictly prohibit an infringement of the rules of the owner's manifestation. In the case where the changing of marks is exposed, the trustee would be regarded as a *dabala*, or thief of livestock. Also, the intentions of a man who hides or tells a lie in response to an owner's inquiry would be suspect. Any owner would compulsorily recall all of his camel from trustee as soon as any infringement of the rules of the owner's manifestation is revealed.

Case No. 2

Guyo (Algana, alano) trusted his personal camel to Isako (Algana, eilo). Isako, however, did not inform Adano, son of Isako, that this camel was not their personal camel but a trusted camel. Adano mistook this camel for their personal camel. When Adano took their herd of camel to a camel camp in 1975, this camel gave birth to a female. This calf camel bleated continuously. Gabra believe that camels will stop bleating if you cut all or part of its ear. Adano cut all of its ear, which Guyo took as an infringement of the rules of the owner's manifestation. Guyo subsequently recalled his three personal camels from Isako's enclosure.

Another rule of the owner's manifestation concerns the trustee's duty to report to the owner when trusted camel has died. If a trusted camel dies, the trustee must look for someone who can provide evidence that the cause of death was not the result of the trustee's carelessness or a case of intentional slaughter. The trustee can not slaughter a trusted camel even when it is on the verge of death. The trustee must in this manner report to the owner the cause of its death. In the case where the owner lives so far away that the trustee cannot report in person, the trustee can report to a member of the owner's clan. The trustee should also report any such incidents to the trustor as well.

Case No. 3

On 3rd May 1996, a herdsman found that hyenas were attacking a female camel, a trusted camel belonging to Abudo (Algana, elmale) which had disappeared the night before. The herdsman chased the hyenas away and informed Abudo. When Abudo and his party arrived at the scene of the attack, this female camel was barely alive. Although Abudo diagnosed its wounds as mortal, he could not slaughter the camel without the owner's permission. The owner lived far from Abudo's settlement, thus Abudo decided to call one of the owner's fellow clan members whose settlement was near Abudo's and ask him to make the judgment regarding the camel. Under a hot, blazing sun, Abudo and his people waited for the man to come. In the end, the clan member arrived at the scene in the evening, by which time the camel had died. Abudo showed him that there was no artificial wound. The clan representative agreed that the camel was killed by hyenas, and Abudo fulfilled his obligations. Only then did Abudo and his party begin to butcher the carcass and carried it to the settlement.

As indicated by Case No. 3, Gabra live in fear of the death of a trusted camel. Trustee informs the owner or his clan members about the condition of a trusted camel if it becomes sick. If the trustee cannot think of any other way but the slaughter of the trusted camel, he would ask a member of the owner's clan to slaughter it on his behalf. I once observed the slaughter of sick trusted camel. The man who slaughtered the camel was the owner's close agnate, who had by chance been passing near the settlement during his journey. Before slaughtering the camel, he sought out a fellow clan member who stayed near the settlement to inquire into the facts of the camel's sickness. He confirmed that the trustee had already informed the owner of the trusted camel and only after that did he agree to slaughter the camel.

2. The Rules of Camel Treatment

The rules concerning camel treatment are concerned with (1) routine management, (2) appropriate treatment for a special camel, and (3) rules concerned with holding of rites.

(1) Rules of routine management concern such aspects as the prohibition of doing unusual or unreasonable violence to a camel, the undertaking immediate search for a missing camel, and so on.

(2) There are certain camels which are considered special and for which special treatment is required. For example, there is a camel which is called *doro*, the milk of

which must not be mixed with the milk of other camels, poured into any milk container except its own, or used for any type of cooking (even such as putting in tea). Further, women, girls and baby boys are prohibited from drinking the milk of *doro*. Another category of special camels is *saruma*, camels taken from enemies. One who belongs to the same generation of a man who killed and plundered the enemy must not drink the milk of the *saruma* and its offspring. These restrictions are called *lagu*.⁽⁷⁾ It is believed that the trustee has to treat these special camels in an appropriate way, otherwise the trustee and the camels in his enclosure will be visited by a calamity.

(3) There are two important rites of the Gabra, the first of which is the *soryo*, a rite of livestock sacrifice, and the second which is the *almado*, a rite of offering milk. Both rites are conducted for invoking prosperity for family and camel. It is believed that if these rites are not held periodically, the camel will become sterile or become sick or even die. Trustees are thus bound to make an effort to hold these rites.

This is, however, considerably difficult, because of the strict requirements concerning the holding of these rites, especially in the case of *soryo*. A *soryo* must be attended by a father and his first born and can not be held if either is absent. As is often the case for young men, because they look after livestock in the livestock camps, usually remotely located hundreds of kilometers away from the settlement. Thus the father must call his first born together with his livestock back to their settlement, a very difficult task, especially in the dry season.

The rules concerning camel treatment preserve the camel's health and ultimate prosperity. Trustees have the duty of keeping trusted camel healthy. If a trustee violates the rules of the owner's manifestation, the owner must compulsorily recall his camels at once. However, the owner tolerates trustees violating the rules concerning the camel treatment and it is rare to see a sanction against trustee who violated these rules, if it is the trustees first offense or a minor offense. The owner or other men of his clan would warn the trustee if repeated violation is revealed. It is not until a trustee continues to violate the rules despite warnings that the owner would compulsorily recall his camels.

SOCIAL POSITIONS BY TRUST

The relationship which exists between an owner and any trustee, an important part of the human relationships of the *jäl* chain, is the trust system's particular element. The social positions of individual in the Gabra society are important to note, paying attention to the relationship between an owner and any trustee.

I. The Owner's Position

As a man can get a personal camel on the occasion of his circumcision, his sister's marriage or through raiding an enemy, all Gabra men have the possibility of being the owner of a trusted camel.⁽⁸⁾ By trusting these personal camels, all men thus participate in the world of trust system from the position of a camel owner.

What an owner expects of the trust system is realization of the fertility of his personal camels. From the viewpoint of an owner, the trust system is insurance against such tragic affairs as herd annihilation resulting from drought, an epidemic or enemy attack. To disperse personal camels over a wide area minimizes the risks of such events. Such thinking is evidenced in Gabra proverbs: "But for the trusted camel in other's enclosure, there would be no livestock in your enclosure" (*horin al injíre, mona le injír*); "Do not confer livestock, but leave it in other's care (*hori hinkennáni, hinkénnatan*)."

However, an owner always fears that a trustee might lose his camel through lack of care or even steal his camel. Therefore, the owner traces the *jal* chain and carefully watches trustees as to whether they treat his camels appropriately. In reality, however, there are few owners who know the trustees of all his personal camels. It is very difficult to trace the *jal* chain, because trustees are widely scattered with respect to one another. On behalf of an owner, however, clan members are also widely scattered and do trace the *jal* chain and watch trustees. Usually, Gabra know some background surrounding trusted camels belonging not only to trustees in his settlement, but also in neighboring settlements. If Gabra find that a neighbor is keeping a trusted camel which belongs to his clan's member, he carefully observes how this neighbor treats the camel and scrutinizes the sublease trustee and the number of offspring and sex born of the trusted camel.

Ideologically speaking, camels are possessed by a clan, as explained before. All clan members take an interest in trustees, since they consider the personal camels of their clan members are in a sense also their own personal camels.

Case No. 4

In 1988, Boru (Algana, alano) held a trusted camel whose owner was Elema (Algana, elmale). Boru did not devote himself adequately to camel herd management. It was said that Boru did not search for lost camels, and thus, the offspring of Elema's camel were killed by hyenas when they went missing. Ibrae (Algana, elmale), who belongs to the same clan of Elema and lives near the settlement of Boru, would always find the lost camels of Boru's camel herd. The people who lived in Ibrae's settlement encouraged him to take the necessary measures by sending Elema a message stating that Boru immoderately violated the rules of the camel treatment. After receiving Elema's reply, Ibrae ordered Boru to bring all of Elema's camel. Boru, however, begged forgiveness and Ibrae subsequently warned him not to violate the rules of trusted camel again, otherwise the trusted camels would be compulsorily recalled.

Most of the cases in which a trustee violates the rules concerning the trusted camels are exposed by the clan members of the owner. The clan surveillance network is diffused throughout Gabra society.

Conversely speaking, the trust system sets a duty for the members of an owner's clan and mobilizes them to protect their personal camels. If a member of an owner's clan does not discharge his duty, it is his turn to be blamed by his clan's members. In performing this duty, people repeatedly reconfirm that he belongs to his clan. In this respect, trust system gives the reality of clan to each individuals and firm up

clan unity.

II. The Trustee's Position

A camel owner and the members of his clan keep watch on trustees, but they are simultaneously watched by other camel owners and the members of their respective clans. This is because the owners also depend on trusted camels which they trusted in from other Gabra. By virtue of this, every individuals are aware that their behavior is carefully being watched while they are at the same time watching other's behavior. How trustees care for the trusted camel is revealed when a camel disappears. Camels have a tendency to wander off and it is very difficult to prevent this. As soon as a trusted camel disappears, the trustee makes efforts to recover it safely. If the trustee does not hasten to locate the camel, this would be reported to the owner or members of the owner's clan. The trustee immediately tracks the camel and seeks witnesses for additional information, for if the owner or any men of the owner's clan were to find the disappeared camel before the trustee, that trustee would be suspected of violating the rules of camel treatment.

Another aspect of the position of trustee involves extending the owner hospitality, even on unexpected visits, and responding to the owner's demands. There are some cases, however, when a trustee does not know the identity of the owner of a trusted camel. Although Gabra claim such a case would never happen, there are cases when an informant could not identify the owners of each trusted camel. In the extended repeating of subleases, someone might neglect to confirm the owner of a trusted camel, and although the owners of such camels are among the Gabra, the sublease trustee acquires a trusted camel whose owner remains unidentified to him. Indeed, some Gabra hold some trusted camels for which the owner is unidentified.

What this ultimately means is that the trustee does not know to whom to show the respect accordant to an owner. As only a Gabra would be the owner of a trusted camel, however, the trustees must be very careful for fear of offending such an unidentified owner. As a result, trustees have to show respect to anyone who is Gabra.

The fear of any Gabra who has the potential to be an owner is weaker than the fear of a known owner. However, while the fear of the other Gabra who may be an owner is attenuated and not relevant in reality, it remains a weak fear for any Gabra, as it can suddenly manifest itself as powerfully relevant.

Case No. 5

Elema (Algana, doryo), who lived in the North-horr Location, knew that one of his camel was held by a sublease trustee called Guyo (Galbo), who lived in the Maikona Location more than 100 kilometers from the North-horr Location. Elema traveled to Guyo's settlement to see the condition of his camel. When Elema arrived at the settlement, Guyo was absent on a day trip herding camel. Elema asked Guyo's mother for water, but having never heard of Elema, she refused. That evening when Guyo returned, he also denied Elema hospitality, as he as well had never heard of him. Neighbors in the same settlement came to see Elema and asked him about his journey. As Elema related that although he was

the owner of the trusted camel which Guyo held, but had not received even a glass of water, Guyo himself, as well as the neighbors, were astonished, and provided him with water and slaughtered a goat as a means of offering their hospitality to him. The following day, Guyo also presented a cloth to Elema as compensation, and Elema forgave him.

There are cases when the unidentified owner becomes angry with a trustee for being rejected. In some of these cases, the owner compulsorily recalls his personal camel from the trustee, an act which strengthens the fear of such occurrences among the Gabra and makes such possibilities very real. When trustees hear of such cases, they recognize the strong power which owners possess and this reinforces the fear of other Gabra. The unidentified owners in most case live nearer to the trustees than the trustees imagine. The trustees do not know when and where they will encounter the owner. There is even the possibility that an acquaintance one day reveals to a trustee that he is the owner of a trusted camel.

There are cases where a visitor learns he is an owner simply by virtue of the reaction of the host. It is only when the traveler expresses his discontent with a host's lack of hospitality to those around and one of them informs him that one of his personal camels is in the host's enclosure that he realizes that he is an owner to the host. An inhospitable reception, even in ignorance, can still bring the anger of an owner.

If the trustee wants to prevent such an occurrence from arising, he must pay respects to virtually all Gabra every day and react in good faith to all requests. Trustees have to give visitors a warm welcome or have to help others when they fetch water for livestock or build enclosures. Trustees have to show all Gabra the attitude required for an owner, especially when they do not know the owner of trusted camels.

Thus, we can find two functions of the trust system from the viewpoint of trustee. First, the trust system activates the morality of the Gabra society. Although it is ideal if people should mutually help each other and everybody understands the importance of such mutual help, it is very hard to give a truly hospitable welcome to an unknown visitor, when the trustee himself struggles to support his family. It is difficult to help others care for their livestock, when one is tired from caring for one's own. Trustees, with such harsh realities, tend to begrudge others help and treat visitors impolitely. The trust system, however, forces trustees into helping or giving a warm welcome, even though the trustee is himself subject to harsh living standards. A Gabra keeps his morality when he exposes himself to surveillance by all Gabra who have the potential to be an owner, as well as the known owner and owner's clan members.

Second, the trust system makes individuals conscious of the broad Gabra community. Of course, I am not suggesting that trust system is the only system which makes individuals conscious of the Gabra community. However, it would be no mistake to say that the trust system is one of the important matters which activates the sense of belonging to the Gabra community.

Trustees recognize that they owe their lives to the trusted camels which are possessed by other Gabra. The occasional news that an owner compulsorily recalls

someone's trusted camels reminds other trustees that they also depend on other Gabra. A trustee may never meet with some of these owners who live far away from him. To begin with, an owner is the other who is outside of the trustee's daily world, because owner and sublease trustees tend to belong to different phratries, while trustor and trustee tend to belong to the same phratry. However, when he sees the trusted camel, it reminds the trustee of these owners. In this sense, trusted camels work as a media which connects the trustee and the owners who live outside of the trustee's daily world. By virtue of this, the trust system increases the sense of belonging to the broad Gabra community.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has shown how the Gabra trust system puts the Gabra in relationships with other Gabra. The feature unique to the trust system is that it assigns men to a status of either owner or trustee. From the owner's side, the trust system strongly unites members of his clan around a common purpose. Ideally, the clan owns camels, and thus all clan members keep a close eye on trustees to ensure proper care for the camels. The trust system mobilizes and unites the members of the camel owner's clan.

From the trustee's side, the trust system increases the morality and sense of belonging to the Gabra community. While trustees always take care not to incur an owner's displeasure, patterns of trusting may result in the existence of trusted camel for which the owner is unidentified. As only a Gabra would be the owner of a trusted camel, the trustees must be very careful for fear of offending an unknown owner. As a result, trustees have to show respect to anyone who is Gabra. As well, trusted camel reminds the trustee of these owners, who live outside of the trustee's daily world. It raises the sense of belonging to the broad Gabra community.

Both clan and Gabra as an ethnic group are no more than "Imagined Communities," as Anderson (1983) pointed out. However, Gabra recognize the reality of their ethnicity and clanship through this camel trust system. For the individual, to practice the trust system is to identify himself with both clan and Gabra.

NOTES

- (1) Spencer (1973: 37) called this special transfer system "share." Schlee (1989: 56) and Dahl (1979: 180) called it "loan." Following the terminology of Sato (1992; 1994), I use the term "trust."
- (2) This research was financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Japan (Monbusho International Scientific Research Program No.02041012 and No. 05041028).
- (3) Schlee (1989) reconstructed the historical process of generation for each ethnic group through comparison of the oral traditions.
- (4) Trusting camels is recommended on Monday, Thursday and Friday. It is strongly prohibited to trust camels on Sunday, because Sunday is the day for the camel (*aiyan gala*). It is also prohibited to give a camel on the day of the week on which the trustor was born.
- (5) The word which I translate as fear is *soda*. According to the Boran-English dictionary

compiled by Leus (1995), *soda* is equivalent of fear, dread, fright, timidity, respect and care. On the other hand, Gamta (1989) lists only awe, dread, fear, fright, horror, panic, phobia and terror, but not respect.

- (6) Among the four kinds of livestock, namely, camel, cattle, goat and sheep, the marks of sheep and camels cannot be changed. On the other hand, the marks of cattle and goats can be changed, if the animal is a personal livestock.
- (7) The restriction that the husband and wife can not drink the camel milk which husband pays for as his bride wealth is also *lagu*.
- (8) In reality, first born male possesses most of the personal camel, while subsequent born male does not. The effects of this unbalanced possession of personal camel in the Gabra society have been described elsewhere (Soga, 1997) .

REFERENCES

- Almagor, U. 1978. *Pastoral Partners*. Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso Editions, London.
- Baxter, P. T. W. 1970. Stock management and the diffusion of property rights among the Boran. *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, pp.116-127. Haile Sellassie I University, Addis Ababa.
- Dahl, G. & A. Hjort, 1976. *Having Herds; Pastoral Herd Growth and Household Economy*. Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology 2. University of Stockholm, Stockholm.
- Dahl, G. 1979. *Suffering Grass: Subsistence and Society of Waso Borana*. Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology 8, University of Stockholm, Stockholm.
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1940. *The Nuer*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Gamta, T. 1989. *Oromo-English Dictionary*. AAU Printing Press, Addis Ababa.
- Leus, T. 1995. *Borana Dictionary*. W.S.D. Grafisch Centrum Schijndel, Holland.
- Republic of Kenya. 1994. *Kenya Population Census 1989: Vol.1*. Central Bureau of Statistics, Office of the Vice-President and Ministry of Planning and National Development.
- Sato, S. 1992. The camel trust system in the Rendille society of northern Kenya. *African Study Monographs*, 13(2), 69-89.
- 1994. Livestock friends: the human relationships connected by the camel transfer. In (R. Ohtuka, ed.) *Cultural Adaptation to the Natural Resources, Lectures on living on the earth* (3). pp.95-120, Yuzankaku, Tokyo (in Japanese).
- Soga, T. 1997. The camel exchange system among the Gabra: Patterns and consequences of inheritance. In (K. Fukui, E. Kurimoto & M. Shigeta, eds.) *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective. Papers of the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies 2*: pp. 597-615. Shokado Book Sellers, Shokado Book Sellers, Kyoto.
- Schlee, G. 1989. *Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya*. Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Spencer, P. 1973. *Nomads in Alliance: Symbiosis and Growth among the Rendille and Samburu of Kenya*. Oxford University Press, London.
- Thomas, E.M. 1966. *Warrior Herdsmen*. Alfred A.Knopf Inc., New York.
- Torry, W.I. 1973. *Subsistence Ecology among the Gabra: Nomads of the Kenya/Ethiopia Frontier*. Ph. D dissertation, Columbia University.
- 1976. Residence rules among the Gabra nomads: Some ecological considerations. *Ethnology*, 15(3): 269-285.
- Whitely, W.H. 1974. The classification and distribution of Kenya's African languages. In (W.

H. Whitely, ed.) *Language in Kenya*, pp.13-68. Oxford University Press, Nairobi.

——— Accepted *December 24, 1997*

Authors Name and Address: Toru SOGA, *Faculty of Humanities, Hirosaki University, Bunkyo-cho 1, Hirosaki-City, Aomori 036-8224, JAPAN.*